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AUTHOR Sperry, Len T.
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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to aid students in communicating and understanding some of their perceptions on human relations with students and teachers of other races and groups and to help teachers understand and show concern for the human relations needs of the students. The method used was an objective and quantified survey feedback. Data were collected from elementary school students and teachers by taped discussions and rating instruments. Portions of this data were presented to teachers for consideration and discussion. Teachers, with the help of a consultant, analyzed the process of interaction among students and between teacher and student. Student feedback data were collected by audio-taping student-led discussions. The six sessions dealt with issues including prejudice, equality, stereotyping, myths, and the generation gap. Evaluation summaries of the teacher confirmed the statistical analysis that changes in a teacher's perception and attitude toward students had occurred. Further outcomes which could be expected were a) increased liking among the parties who interact, b) increased pressure for clarifying one's position on relevant issues, and c) increased pressure to implement the new planned changes. (MJM)

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CHANGING TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD HUMAN RELATIONS PROBLEMS IN INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

Len T. Sperry, Ph.D.
Marquette University

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Objectives: Tensions can run high in integrated schools where a majority of teachers are white and a vocal minority of black students and/or their parents feel that their teachers neither understand nor are concerned about them. Usually implicit in such grievances are mistaken notions about various human relations and communications concepts, and the manifestation of these mistaken notions in teacher-student relations. Since the student-teacher relationship is an organizational phenomenon consisting of role perceptions, expectations, and consequent authority-subordinate behavior, rather than individual-individual behavior, it seems advisable to approach problems concerning this relationship with an organizational model of behavior. In most cases, school personnel are at a loss in handling such problems since their training and experience have placed emphasis on feeding back data at the subjective or person-person level, whereas coping adequately with human relations problems in an organizational context demands that emphasis be placed on feeding back objective data which is focused on the role, intergroup, and organizational level. Those who have attempted to use a subjective, sensitivity-confrontation approach such as group counseling and T-grouping may have found that they have actually increased tensions and discord by unwittingly pitting personality against personality.

On the other hand, the survey feedback approach is an objective and quantified process which focuses on work roles and relationships rather than on individual personalities as such; on job function, accountability, authority, and communications patterns, rather than on personality traits and characteristics. The survey feedback approach--as delineated by Matthew Miles (1969)--is a process

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in which outside staff and personnel and students of the school collaboratively gather, analyze, and interpret data which deal with various aspects of the school's functioning and its members' interactions. Using this data as a base, the members begin to correctively alter the structure of the educational plan and the members' interactions and relationships. To aid students in communicating and understanding some of their perceptions about human relations problems with students and teachers of other races and groups, and to help teachers understand and show concern for the human relations needs of the students, the following project was designed, implemented, and evaluated using the survey feedback approach.

Procedure: First, data was collected from students and teachers by way of taped discussion and rating instruments. Second, portions of this data were presented to teachers for consideration and discussion. Third, teachers analyzed--with the guidance of an outside consultant--the process of interaction between student-student and student-teacher, and subsequently changed their perceptions and attitudes, and initiated changes in the human relations curriculum of the school. In other words, structured feedback from student discussion groups and teacher self-ratings were considered as inputs to formal teacher discussion sessions, while output consisted of informal feedback to students in terms of better human relations, also indicated by positive changes in teacher self-ratings. Miles indicated that as a result of this objective, inquiry-encouraging approach three outcomes could be expected in terms of members' relationships: increased liking among the parties who interact; increased pressure for clarifying one's position on relevant issues; and, increased pressure to implement the new planned changes. It appears that all three of these outcomes were realized in this pilot project without having risked an unfortunate confrontation between teachers, students, and community.

Student feedback data was collected by audio-taping student-led discussions. It was assumed that elementary students would communicate more freely their perceptions of human relations if another student--a junior high student specially trained to lead these discussions--and not the regular teacher, were leading the discussions. Six sessions of forty-five minutes, meeting twice a week were scheduled. Each of the first five sessions dealt with a particular issue: prejudice, equality, stereotyping, myths, and the generation gap. The sixth session evaluated and summarized the first five. Tapes from all sessions were content analyzed and edited into five, one-half hour tapes which then became the survey material that was fed back to the teachers. The teachers from both the experimental and control groups completed a self-rating scale of teacher organizational behavior devised by Likert (1968). This scale indicates a teacher's perceptions and attitudes toward communication,motivation, authority, and decision-making in classroom interactions. The control group met only twice for pre- and post-testing. The experimental group met for seven, one-hour sessions, with the first and last session being designated for pre- and post-testing. In the other five sessions, half the time was spent listening to one of the five tapes, and the other half discussing it. The purpose of the meetings was to increase awareness into student-student and teacher-student conceptions and perceptions regarding human relations. Two feedback media were used for this purpose. One was the five, half-hour summary tapes of student discussion. The other was a checklist of human relations concepts which helped structure the team discussion, and the Likert rating scale which the teachers used this time to evaluate their students' perceptions of them as teachers.

Data Source: The elementary school in which the pilot project was tested was composed of six hundred, K-6 grade students who were grouped into teams of approximately one hundred students and four teachers. For experimental purposes, the two teams

of students with ages of nine to eleven were chosen: the experimental group consisted of a cross-sectional sample of thirty-two students from one team and their four teachers; the control group consisted of the four teachers from the other team. Both teams of teachers were white, with three females, and one male, having an average age of 32 years. The sample of students were equally composed of blacks and whites with a few Spanish-speaking. There were eight junior high discussion leaders of which half were black. One black and one white discussion leader teamed together and were assigned to a group of eight elementary school children.

Results: For statistical analysis, only differences between pre- and post-test scores on the Likert scale were considered, although evaluation summaries and follow-up interview data were also collated. With the team being considered the unit of measure, statistical significance was found between the experimental and control groups (.05 level). When the individual team member was considered the unit of measure, significance was found at the .01 level.

Significance of the Study: Evaluation summaries of the teachers in the experimental treatment confirmed the statistical analysis that changes in teacher perception and attitudes toward students had occurred. All teachers indicated that a similar kind of procedure would be beneficial, or even necessary, for any teachers before realistic planning and changes can be made in establishing better relations among students and teachers of different races and social background. The utility of this objective, and rather non-threatening method of having teachers "face themselves" is just beginning to be explored by other researchers. Also, it may well be argued that this technique could and should become an integral part not only of inservice, but also the preservice training of teachers.